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Senate

The Senate met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable JON TESTER, a Senator from the State of Montana.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Eternal Spirit, the way, the truth, and the life, give our lawmakers growth of ethical vision that, with the passing of years, they may enter into the fullness of faith. Uphold them in their disappointments and make them patient, even amid the unsolved mysteries of life's seasons. Let such robust confidence in You shine through their lives with such persuasive beauty that it will dispel the darkness of fear and doubt. Lift their lives from the battle zone of combative words to a caring community, where leaders communicate esteem and respect to each other. Lord, help them to trust in Your unfailing love and to rejoice at the unfolding of Your merciful providence.

We pray in the Name of the Prince of Peace. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Honorable JON TESTER led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

APPOINTMENT OF ACTING PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will please read a communication to the Senate from the President pro tempore (Mr. BYRD).

The assistant legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, May 13, 2008.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby

appoint the Honorable JON TESTER, a Senator from the State of Montana, to perform the duties of the Chair.

ROBERT C. BYRD,
President pro tempore.

Mr. TESTER thereupon assumed the chair as Acting President pro tempore.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader is recognized.

SCHEDULE

Mr. REID. Mr. President, following leader time, the Senate will resume consideration of S. 2284, the flood insurance legislation. There will be 60 minutes for debate equally divided and controlled in the usual form prior to a series of votes. Senators should expect votes to begin shortly after 11, maybe 11:10 or thereabouts, in relation to the following items: The McConnell amendment on energy with a 60-vote threshold; Reid amendment on energy with a 60-vote threshold; passage of S. 2284, the flood insurance legislation; cloture on the motion to proceed to H.R. 980, first responders collective bargaining. As a reminder, the Senate will recess from 12:30 until 2:15 today to allow the weekly caucus luncheons to meet.

OBSTRUCTIONISM

Mr. REID. Mr. President, we have talked now for several months about the number of filibusters. Today, this will be raised to 71. Comments have been made by Republican leaders that it doesn't matter; we are just doing the people's business; we are only getting done what is important.

The American people know what is going on. It is obstructionism at its zenith, at its best. The American people are beginning clearly to see this issue.

A story in newspapers all around the country today, based on an article by Jon Cowen and Dan Balz in the Washington Post, indicates that the American people are seeing what is going on.

In polling done by the Post, along with others, the political party in America best able to deal with the country's problems: Democrats, by a 21-point advantage. It is obvious why. We are trying to do something about the problems facing America today. We are trying to do something about the intractable civil war we are engaged in in Iraq. We have a situation where we have 50 million people with no health insurance. We have the Earth's temperature rising every day. Our Earth has a fever. We need to do something legislatively to try to bring down that fever. We have an education system that is in crumbles. We want to do something about educating the troops coming back from Iraq. We believe these troops are just as gallant and heroic as the troops who fought in World War II. When the World War II troops came home, they had the ability to go to school and were educated, and it happened. It changed America forever. We think America could be changed forever again in the new paradigm we now face with these men and women coming back by the tens of thousands and not being able to afford to go to school.

We know that the Presidential candidate of the Republicans, Senator MCCAIN, says it is too generous. Well, this piece of legislation, written by JIM WEBB, is generous, but it should be because these troops returning from Iraq deserve our generosity.

The Democratic advantage is going to be pronounced come election time. We have tried to work on a cooperative basis and have been denied that time after time after time. We know that

● This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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